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Thursday, August 12, 2003

## NEWS RELEASE

### ***Cynicism and Confusion are Creating Morale Problems in Canada's Public Service, Say Authors.***

***Rather than being part of the solution, the new public management  
movement can be part of the problem, new studies from IRPP reveal.***

***Institute for  
Research on  
Public Policy***

***Institut de  
recherche  
en politiques  
publiques***

Montreal – Attempting to simply emulating private sector practices to reform the public service, as suggested by some in the new public management movement, has contributed to aggravation, cynicism and decreased morale among civil servants, say two new studies published today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP).

In Canada and elsewhere in the world over the past few years, bureaucracies have often been the object of much criticism. This growing problem, which affects federal and provincial public services, seems to be exacerbated by the perception that public service is both unresponsive to people's needs and inefficient, a perception that has led to several efforts at reforms of the public service, often modelled on private sector principles. Instead of solving the problems, the two IRPP studies have found that, in fact, these reforms have fed cynicism and disillusionment among civil servants.

The IRPP asked two professors from Quebec's École nationale d'administration publique to examine the issue of cynicism (both within and toward the public service) and to respond to three questions: How do you define cynicism? In what forms does it manifest itself? What are its causes? In her paper, entitled "From Skepticism to Cynicism: Paradoxes of Administrative Reform," Isabelle Fortier argues that cynicism among civil servants, like that among the general public, is caused by ambivalence and paradoxes surrounding the reform process. While not denying that there is room for improvement in public organizations, or that bureaucratic management can produce pernicious effects, she maintains that the efforts to improve public administration may be compromised by the very ideas that are supposed to bring about the desired changes.

In his study, entitled "From Cynicism to Organizational Disillusion: New Public Management as Confusion Factor," Christian Rouillard maintains that the new public management movement does not live up to its claim of bolstering collective morale, and it is a source of confusion that contributes to both the creation of and the gradual but steady spread of an organizational culture of disillusionment.

The authors caution against overemphasis on some private sector principles that might be unsuitable for the reality of the public service and call into question the fundamental role of the state.

The two papers are part of IRPP's governance research program and are published in the latest issue of *Choices*, now available online in Adobe (.pdf) format on the Institute's Web site ([www.irpp.org](http://www.irpp.org)).

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact the IRPP.

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